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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3929
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 5907
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 003373

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PK PREL PTER

SUBJECT: BOUCHER REVIEWS COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORTS WITH
INTERIOR MINISTER MALIK

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In two separate wide-ranging discussions with Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Boucher, Interior Minister Malik reported that the Pakistani government remained firmly committed to completing military action against extremists in Bajaur. Malik expressed concern that continued U.S. drone attacks were making it difficult for the government to describe America as a friend and not an enemy. He supported the idea of joint border patrols with Afghanistan and ISAF as a way to curb the growing influx of Afghan and foreign fighters that were strengthening the militants in Bajaur. Ambassador Boucher stressed U.S. support for both the Border Coordination Centers and the proposed Joint Military Operations Coordination Center as ways to improve both intelligence and ground forces coordination. Malik said the government was trying to provide 50 million rupees as a cash incentive to the emerging but poorly armed lashkar (tribal militia) forces. Malik agreed that the Afghan Taliban was not a united group but expressed concern about the effects in Pakistan of an Afghan initiative to negotiate with reconcilables. Boucher reiterated the U.S. position that we supported Afghan and Pakistan-led reconciliation with those who renounce violence because we knew any solution to the current conflict required a political element.

¶2. (C) Malik identified the Sunni extremist Lashkar-e-Jhangvi group as having growing ties to both Baitullah Mehsud and al Qaida; he said Jhangvi was responsible for both the Danish Embassy and Marriott bombings in Islamabad and promised the government would soon launch an operation in Jhang, which was identified as the source of the Marriott bombing operation. He said concern about the Talibanization of Karachi was exaggerated but agreed the increased presence of Pashtuns in the city was exacerbating long-standing ethnic tensions with the ruling political party. Malik reviewed his efforts to reach a temporary cease-fire with Baloch nationalists, detailed equipment and training required to strengthen local police anti-terrorism capability, and described what he termed Nawaz Sharif's efforts "to take down" the current government. Malik offered a power point presentation on the security situation (sent separately) and showed video clips of a training camp for young male suicide bombers in Waziristan. End Summary.

¶3. (U) On October 18 and 19, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher, accompanied by Ambassador, met with Interior Minister Rehman Malik.

Assistant Secretary Boucher's Senior Advisor Caitlin Hayden and Polcouns also attended. Following the first meeting, he offered a power point presentation on the security situation (sent separately) and showed video clips of a training camp for young male suicide bombers in Waziristan.

¶4. (C) Malik reported that in a five and a half hour October 18 meeting he attended with President Zardari, Prime Minister Gilani, Chief of Army Staff General Kayani, Frontier Corps Chief LtGen Khan and Inter-Services Intelligence Chief LtGen Pasha, the government decided to continue military operations in Bajaur Agency. When pressed by Boucher, Malik insisted that the government had the resolve to finish the fight in Bajaur. The militants are finally "feeling the heat" said Malik. "We are losing lives daily" and combating thousands of militants, including reinforcements from Afghanistan, who were armed with missiles and rocket launchers, said Malik. Malik reported that the government recently had arrested 42 Afghans and 171 Uzbeks in the area. Malik indicated that all of this demonstrated the need for joint patrols on both sides of the border; he suggested the patrols be concentrated in areas where the Haqqani network and Hekmatyar were operating. Still, he stressed that the government would reject recent cease-fire offers from militants.

¶5. (C) Malik expressed concern about the effect of reports of U.S. attacks on the government's political position. During the ongoing joint session of parliament on the security situation, Malik reported that the opposition was trying to question whether the U.S. was Pakistan's friend or

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its enemy. Malik repeated his idea that the U.S. say publicly it was providing Predator technology to Pakistan whatever the reality of their control..

¶6. (C) Ambassador Boucher focused on two elements of cooperation: the Border Coordination Centers, that would enhance trilateral sharing of intelligence and ground operations, and the proposed Joint Military Operations Coordination Center, that would provide a vehicle for U.S.-Pakistan intelligence sharing in support of Pakistani ground operations. He agreed that parts of Afghanistan in Konar Province were more connected to Pakistan than Afghanistan and said that U.S. forces were building bridges across the river to strengthen Afghan ties.

¶7. (C) Malik reviewed how lashkars (tribal militias) were springing up across the Federally Administered Tribal Areas but acknowledged that the Frontier Corps and the Political Agents were encouraging this phenomena. The problem, said Malik, was that the lashkars had motivation but few arms. The Pakistani government was trying to funnel 50 million rupees of "incentive" money to them through the Frontier Corps officers. The government needed, he said, to compensate for the Taliban outpaying soldiers.

¶8. (C) On Balochistan, Malik said he had negotiated with a range of stakeholders and had achieved a temporary cease-fire with the Baloch militant groups. In exchange, he had pulled back Frontier Corps from 35 checkpoints and dropped pending charges against key leaders. Boucher commented that Pakistani pressure on the Quetta shura disrupts militant ability to organize cross-border attacks. Malik responded that the shura was not a set, specific group but 5-6 individuals who moved in and out erratically to avoid capture.

¶9. (C) Saying he spoke regularly with Muttahida Quami Movement leader Altaf Hussain, Malik said Hussain's concern about the Talibanization of Karachi were exaggerated. However, Hussain's party was stockpiling weapons and could incite a recurrence of long-standing ethnic rivalries between his Muhajir-based party and the growing community of Pashtuns in Karachi.

¶10. (C) Malik spoke repeatedly about the increased role of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which he claimed was responsible for the Danish Embassy and Marriott bombings. Malik reported that the government had tracked the bomb maker and terrorist handler of the Marriott suicide bomber to Jhang; he would soon launch an operation in Jhang to break up a terrorist cell there, said Malik. Further, Malik said that the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi was linked to both Baitullah Mehsud and al Qaida and was recruiting militants through madrassahs in the Punjab and Sindh provinces. Boucher noted that the U.S. repeatedly has pressed Gulf states to cease funding these madrassahs; we believed militants also were funded through Afghan drug money and local collections from kidnapping and extortion.

¶11. (C) Malik asked if the U.S. had any more information about the alleged meeting in Saudi Arabia between the Taliban and Afghan President Karzai. Boucher said we understood that some Taliban leaders, including the spokesman, had been invited to an iftar hosted by the Saudi government but that the event was not part of an organized discussion on reconciliation. The U.S. believed that the Afghan Taliban could be split, so there was some merit to exploring an outreach to moderate forces willing to renounce violence. Malik reported that "through friends" he knew that Hekmatyar had people in the Afghan parliament and expressed concern that this parliament would split and undermine regional stability.

¶12. (C) Assistant Secretary Boucher asked Malik what was needed to improve Pakistan's policing capabilities. Malik said the Frontier Corps, Levies and Khassadars would be the agents that police the tribal areas; the Frontier Corps needed armored personnel carriers, protective vests, vehicle scanners, and training. He was planning to create an anti-terrorist force within the Federal Intelligence Agency and give the Northwest Frontier Province police a

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counter-terrorism force. Malik suggested that the Friends of Pakistan group focus on establishing a roadmap for anti-terrorism cooperation, especially real-time intelligence to support operations.

Politics

¶13. (C) Malik said he had met recently with Shahbaz Sharif to dispel concerns that the Pakistan People's Party would try to oust him as Chief Minister in Punjab. Malik's concern is that an assault on the Sharifs in Punjab would prompt a backlash in Islamabad. Chaudhry Shujaat of the Pakistan Muslim League was ready to support the Pakistan People's Party in the center even without regaining control of the Punjab, claimed Malik, and that would give the government some additional leverage.

¶14. (C) Nawaz Sharif, said Malik, "has a plan to take us down" and has full Saudi support. Boucher noted that the Saudis are insistant that they have stopped supporting Nawaz; Malik dismissed this as being untrue. Malik claimed Nawaz already was implementing a disinformation campaign against President Zardari and the government; this included spreading rumors that Zardari was an observant, pro-Iranian Shia, buying news anchors and reporters and trying to re-engage on the judiciary issue. Then, there was Nawaz's meeting in Medina with the Taliban, designed to put more pressure on the Islamabad government to negotiate with militants, claimed Malik. Boucher asked what Nawaz would gain from such an initiative; Malik replied that it would all Nawaz to emerge as a local hero as compared to a Zardari who had allegedly sold out to U.S. and Shia interests.

¶15. (U) Assistant Secretary Boucher has cleared this message.

PATTERSON